

Lost articles while flying all too common

By **Aristides S. Delara**

Claims Examiner, Fort Lewis Claims Division

Losses of personal property incurred on commercial and military aircraft sustained by military and civilian personnel incident to service has been on the rise the last few years. In order to successfully claim any loss arising from this scenario, a claimant must meet some basic prerequisites.

There are four conditions a claimant must meet to receive compensation from the Personnel Claims Act:

- Proof of ownership, which must also include proof of tender. The claimant must be able to prove possession

and delivery of these items to the carrier. Possession can be proved either with a unit packing list, sensitive item inventory, or verifiable statements from reliable witnesses. Tender can be proved by airline baggage ticket claim stubs or reliable statements from disinterested witnesses.

- Proof of value, which must include the quantity and condition of the personal property. Value can be proved either with purchase receipts, pictures, appraisals, or reliable estimates from stores or online sources.

- Proof of loss in the manner alleged. A timely claim for lost baggage submitted at the debarkation airport may suffice as a proof of loss.

- At a minimum, the claimant must

be able to prove that adequate efforts were exerted to locate the missing items.

A proof of filing of lost baggage incident report is often required before a claim can be paid. For losses from military flights, claimants are required to report to the Lost and Found Baggage Section on an AMC Form 134.

The information from this form is entered into a global database, which is accessible at the Baggage Service Center at Charleston AFB, South Carolina (AMC Baggage Service Center, 105 South Bates St., Bldg. 164, Charleston AFB, SC 29404; Voice Number 843-963-2895, (DSN 673), CONUS toll free 1-800-851-5761).

Maximum efforts are exerted by the

personnel working at this baggage service center to contact travelers within 24 hours of the loss to advise them of the status of their baggage. Claimants are urged to contact the local airport where they initially filed their lost baggage reports, and the Baggage Service Center for losses sustained on military flights.

Unclaimed baggage within 30 to 90 days from date of loss is turned over to the Property Disposal Officer at the Baggage Service Center.

The U.S. Army Claims headquarters requires that claimants exert reasonable efforts to search for their missing personal property and to wait at least 60 days before filing a claim for lost item/s

to give the system a chance to work.

Proof that the loss was incident to service. The “incident to service” requirement is met even when a claimant is in a leave or permissive TDY status or when traveling on rest and recuperation leave from designated contingency operation areas.

The claimant must also prove that the missing personal property was packed in the checked-in luggages and whether the kinds and quantities of items are reasonable under the circumstances. It is not reasonable to pack inside checked-in luggages small and expensive items that can easily be handcarried.

Contact the Fort Lewis Claims Division for more information: 967-0704.

Experience guides new secretary of the Army

Army News Service

WASHINGTON — Pete Geren became the 20th Secretary of the Army July 13, following his nomination by President George W. Bush and confirmation by the U.S. Senate.

As secretary of the Army, Geren has statutory responsibility for all matters relating to the U.S. Army: manpower, personnel, reserve affairs, installations, environmental issues, weapons systems and equipment acquisition, communications and financial management.

Geren is responsible for the Department of the Army’s annual budget and supplemental of \$170 billion. He leads a work force of more than one million active-duty and reserve-component Soldiers, 230,000 Department of the Army civilian employees and 280,000 contracted service personnel.

He has stewardship over 15 million acres of land.

Caring for Soldiers and their families has been Geren’s top priority since his days serving as the 28th undersecretary

of the Army. In an opening statement during his confirmation hearing last month, he reaffirmed that commitment.

“My year as undersecretary of the Army taught me much — my four months as acting secretary of the Army taught me much more,” he said. “I have been inspired by the selfless service of our Soldiers, and humbled by the sacrifice of their families.”

Geren was the undersecretary of the Army until Feb. 21, 2006. He was named acting secretary of the Army March 9.

Geren joined the Defense Department in September 2001 to serve as special assistant to the secretary of defense with responsibilities in the areas of inter-agency initiatives, legislative affairs and special projects. He also served as acting secretary of the Air Force from July to November 2005.

Before joining the Defense Department, Geren was an attorney and businessman in Fort Worth, Texas.

From 1989 until his retirement in 1997, Geren was a member of the U.S. Congress, representing the 12th Congressional District of Texas for four terms. He served on the Armed Services, Science & Technology and the Public Works and Transportation Committees during his tenure in Congress.



Geren

Think safety while cooking out

By **Lori Yerdon**

U.S. Army Combat Readiness Center

FORT RUCKER, Ala. – With 81 percent of all U.S. households owning a charcoal, electric or gas grill, practicing a little common sense and adhering to safe barbecuing practices will reduce the chance of serious injury while grilling.

According to the Hearth, Patio & Barbecue Association, 60 percent of grill owners use their grills year-round; with 47 percent grilling at least 1-2 times per week during peak summer months. The most popular grilling occasions are Fourth of July, Memorial Day and Labor Day, but an increasing number of grillers report using their grills during the winter, too.

“Being responsible with grills, especially around children, is important,” said Deidra Darsa, PR and media relations manager, for HPBA. “Always read the owner’s manual before using your grill and follow specific usage, assembly and safety procedures.”

Everyone must realize that when people are grilling, they’re working with fire and there’s always a chance of getting burned, added Darsa.

In May, while trying to light a grill, a Soldier was burned on his face and arms. He used an excessive amount of lighter fluid on some charcoal, then

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Deidra Darsa

closed the grill cover. When the Soldier attempted to light the grill a few moments later, it exploded resulting in first- and second-degree burns.

“Grilling-related accidents send numerous individuals to emergency rooms each year,” said Col. John Campbell, command surgeon for the U.S. Army Combat Readiness Center. “By understanding safe techniques and precautions, the number can be drastically reduced.”

The HPBA offers the following safety tips to help keep grilling a safe and enjoyable experience:

- Using barbecue grills outdoors, only. Never barbecue in a trailer, tent, house, garage, or any enclosed area because carbon monoxide may accumulate and cause a fatal injury.

- Ensure that grills are in an open area that is away from buildings, overhead combustible surfaces, dry leaves, or brush.

- Use barbecue utensils with long handles, forks, tongs, etc., to avoid

burns and splatters.

- Wear clothing that does not have hanging shirt tails, frills, or apron strings that can catch fire, and use flame-retardant mitts when adjusting hot vents.

- Use baking soda to control a grease fire and have a fire extinguisher handy.

- Never leave a grill unattended once lit.

- Use grill pads or splatter mats, which are naturally heat resistant, usually made of lightweight composite cement or plastic, and will protect decks or patios from any grease that misses the drip pan.

- Don’t allow anyone to conduct activity near the grill when in use or immediately following its use. The grill body remains hot up to an hour after being used.

- Never attempt to move a hot grill. It’s easy to stumble or drop it.

“Soldiers, their family members and friends should always exercise caution when grilling,” said Campbell. “Don’t let your safety guard down...enjoy, but stay safe.”

Visit www.hpba.org and www.fs.usda.gov for more information on grilling safety. For more information on the 101 Critical Days of Summer safety campaign, visit <https://crc.army.mil>.